# Show Me Your Fruit

## And I'll Know Your God

# Show Me Your Fruit & I'll Know Your God

# Leaders Guide


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# Week 1 - Significance of Fruit: Leaders Guide

**Group Question**: Who can tell us how many fruit there are according to Galatians 5?

> Answer: There is only one fruit—HIS fruit, HIS character. It's singular- it's not *the fruit(s) of the Spirit are* but *the fruit of the Spirit is*. It's not our fruit, it's His character. All 9 attributes listed in Galatians are a part of what our Christian character should reflect.

**Leader Introduction**

**Context for Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia-** Paul's letter to the Galatian church was meant to address false teachings from Jewish Christians who were leading Gentiles astray into believing the Mosaic Law must still be observed. He sought to remind the saints that the Law of the old covenant could only demand legalistic, external behavior whereas the new covenant of grace through Jesus empowers believers to live transformed lives due to the Spirit's work in them. The evidence of this transformation is the Fruit of the Spirit.

Over the next few weeks, we will take a closer look at the 9 attributes of this fruit Paul emphasized to the Galatian church. Together we'll explore how these spiritual qualities are grown, their purpose in our lives, and the profound impact they can have on those around us.

To begin, let's lay a foundation for our study by taking a holistic look at what the Bible says about fruit.

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Over the next few weeks, we will take a closer look at the 9 attributes of this fruit Paul emphasized to the Galatian church. Together we'll explore how these spiritual qualities are grown, their purpose in our lives, and the profound impact they can have on those around us.

To begin, let's lay a foundation for our study by taking a holistic look at what the Bible says about fruit.

**Key Scriptures:** Gal 5:22-23, Prov 20:4, John 15: 2, Ezek 47:12

**Galatians 5:22-23** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The Living Bible words it a bit differently - ***But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, He will produce this kind of fruit in us:*** love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. *Here there is no conflict with the law***.**

While we are called to be **content with what we have, we should never grow content with where we are** in our spiritual journey; rather we must continuously strive to bear fruit.

> **Prov 20:4**[1] The lazy man will not plow because of winter; He will beg during harvest and have nothing.

> **John 15:2** He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

**As Christians, the fruit in our lives serves as our witness to the world.** It's the evidence of spiritual maturity and enables us to respond to people and circumstances with Christlike character. Anyone can say the right words, words that sound like truth, but it's our lifestyle that is

1. https://ref.ly/Prov%2020.4;esv?t=biblia

telling whether or not we live a life crucified with Christ and walk in the Spirit (Matt 7:16-20).

We are called to be reflections of God, to image Jesus. One way we do this is by intentionally seeking to grow fruit in our lives. Like natural fruit, the Fruit of the Spirit grows from its root, which is the character of God. If it can only be grown spiritually, how do we develop this fruit? John 15:4 & 1 John 3:24 gives us insight.

**Growing the Fruit of the Spirit**: This process can be likened to gardening—it requires intentional care, patience, and effort, just as nurturing spiritual growth does.

> Tilling the ground = **Prayer**; preparing our hearts to receive God's word
>
> Planting seeds = **Reading the Bible**; sowing God's Truth in our hearts
>
> Weeding out hindrances = **Making changes**; removing distractions and sin that stunt growth
>
> Watering = **Worship and fellowship**; refreshes and strengthens
>
> Harvesting = **Bearing fruit**; using it to feed and bring healing to others
>
> **Ezel 47:12** And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month[2], because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. **Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.**

2. https://reachrightstudios.com/pastor-appreciation-month/

**Favorable Fruit:** Because of our unique personalities and life experiences, certain aspects of the Fruit of the Spirit often come more naturally to us, while others may feel more challenging to cultivate. For example, some may find it easy to embrace love, offering kindness and compassion to others, but struggle with self-control in their words or actions. Others may excel in walking in peace, maintaining a sense of calm and steadiness in their lives, but find it difficult to extend gentleness or understanding in relationships. Faithfulness, while a strength for some, can be practiced with such rigid zeal that it overshadows the gentleness and kindness required to balance it.

This tendency to focus on what comes easily can lead to spiritual imbalance. However, the Bible teaches us that the Fruit of the Spirit is one unified fruit with interconnected virtues, each reflecting the character of God and working together to form a holistic testimony of Christlike living.

When we recognize the truth of a singular fruit—**His fruit**—we must accept that we can't pick and choose the attributes we prefer or which behaviors we choose to honor or ignore.

**Group Discussion**

• How does the wording of Galatians 5:22-23 in The Living Bible help us better understand the Holy Spirit's role in producing fruit in our lives?

• Read Matt 7:15-20 in the NLT– How does this connect to the idea that the fruit in our lives serves as our witness to the world?

• Based on John 15:4 & 1 John 3:24, what insights do these verses provide about cultivating spiritual fruit in our lives?

• What are daily practices or non-negotiable habits that keep you rooted in Jesus? Are there other disciplines you'd like to develop or become more consistent with?

• How does focusing only on the "favorable fruit" hinder our growth?

• Which aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit do you find most challenging in this season of your life? Why do you think that is?

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**Reflection:** Growing fruit is a lifelong journey, even when we believe we can taste and see some of it in our lives, there is always more to be grown.

**Personal Application Challenge:** Make a list of the 9 attributes of His fruit, prioritizing which you want to see grown more in your life. At the end of this study go back to the list and reflect on how you've seen each develop over the course of this study.

# Week 2 - Living In Love: Leaders Guide

**Review Questions:** Last week we reviewed Paul's message of fruit to the Galatians and discussed the evidence that shows it's growing in our lives.

Can anyone share what evidence of a fruitful life looks like?

→ Our actions- do we show love, kindness, etc.?

→ Do we have Christlike reactions in our daily relationships and circumstances?

We also discussed how some characteristics of the fruit naturally align with our individual personalities, making them easier to develop, while others require intentional effort and the guidance of the Spirit to nurture and grow.

What are the consequences if we don't take time to work with the Holy Spirit to grow the fruit we find difficult?

→ Limits the ways we can show Jesus to others

→ Leaves gaps in our character and hinders our spiritual maturity

→ Can result in strained relationships

Does anyone recall any of the verses we reviewed that gave instruction on how we can become fruit bearers?

**John 15:4** Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me

**1 John 3:24** Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

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**Leader Introduction**

Today our focus will be on *Love's* role in developing spiritual maturity and how it's the catalyst for all other attributes of the Fruit of the Spirit.

Before we begin, let's read John 15:9-17 together

"As the Father has **loved** me, so have I **loved** you. Now remain in my **love**. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my **love**, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his **love**. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: **Love** each other as I have **loved** you. **Greater love** has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command**: Love each other**.

# Week 2 – Living In Love

Today our focus will be on Love's role in developing spiritual maturity and how it's the catalyst for all other attributes of the Fruit of the Spirit. Before we begin, let's read **John 15:9-17.**

**Key Scriptures:** John 15:9-17, 1 John 4:16, 1 Cor 13:4-7, John 13:35, Col 3:12-15

Unless we first grasp who Jesus is and what He has done for us, we cannot fully embody the fruit described in Gal 5, because Jesus Himself is the **definition of Love.**

> **1 John 4:16** We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in His love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

"**God is Love**" In the original Greek, the phrase "Ho Theos *agapé* estin" is strikingly emphatic, declaring that love is not merely an action God performs or an emotion He expresses, it's intrinsic to His very character.

*Agapé*, the Greek word used throughout Scripture to describe God's love, is unlike other types of love that are rooted in romance, natural familial affection, or sentimentality. Instead, it signifies a love that is selfless, sacrificial, unconditional, and everlasting.

**His Character - His Fruit - His Love**

Love is at the root of all God wants to cultivate in our lives. Some linguistic scholars have even translated Gal 5 with a colon after the word, seeing it as the foundation upon which all fruit is built and believing that Paul listed it first deliberately, defining it as THE fruit with many characteristics.

> "But the fruit of the Spirit is **love:** joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

This brings an interesting perspective when paralleling Gal 5: 22-23 with 1 Cor 13:1-7

> **1 Cor 13:4-7** Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

| Galatians 5:22-23 | 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 |
|---|---|
| Joy | Rejoices with the truth |
| Peace | Not irritable or resentful |
| Patience | Patient |
| Kindness | Kind |
| Goodness | Does not rejoice at wrongdoing |
| Faithfulness | Bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things |
| Gentleness | Not arrogant or rude |
| Self-Control | Does not envy or boast |

> Just like Jesus, compassion moves us to action. This passage can help us in serving as a checklist for how love manifests in action.

Cultivating love is more than a goal to strive after, it's a *command* from God (Matt 22:37-39). Love is not only essential for building healthy relationships, fostering unity, and fulfilling the Great Commission—it's the distinguishing mark of discipleship. It's God's love that sets the believer apart from the unsaved and transforms our lives into a testimony of His grace and power.

**John 13:35** By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

**Loving as God loves is not easy.** *Agapé* love requires us to extend grace and compassion even in the face of rejection, betrayal, or hostility. It demands that we put aside personal pride, preferences, and grievances to prioritize the well-being of others while expecting nothing in return.

One of the greatest tests of godly love is our ability to forgive those who have wronged us—a challenge that can feel counterintuitive. Yet, Jesus' command to forgive is inseparable from His call to love (Matt 5:44).

Despite the challenges of embodying God's love, the rewards are immeasurable. Love makes a way for joy in the midst of grief, peace in chaos, patience during trials, kindness toward the undeserving, goodness that seeks the well-being of others, faithfulness when faced with doubt, gentleness in the face of conflict, and self-control when tempted. ***Agapé* transforms both the giver and the receiver.**

Just as love is the answer to cast out fear (1 John 4:18), it's the unifying force essential for nurturing the growth of all other characteristics of the Fruit of the Spirit.

Read together **Col 3:12-15**

**Group Discussion**

- How do John 15 & Col 3 tie love into the growth of other fruit?

- In John 15:10 & 12, Jesus links love with obedience. Why do you think this connection is significant?

- John 15:13 speaks on the sacrificial nature of love. Are there people in your life whom you find challenging to love?

- What are some practical ways we can show sacrificial and unconditional love in our families, communities, or workplaces?

- Has there been someone in your life who has shown you godly love? What impact has it had on you?

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**Reflection:** Are there specific relationships or situations in your life that God is calling you to approach with greater love?

**Living in Love Challenge:** Identify one person to intentionally show selfless love this week. Reflect on how demonstrating love impacts your relationship with them.

**Additional Scriptures on Love to read:** Rom 5:8, John 3:16, 1 John 4:18

# Week 3 – Journey to Joy: Leaders Guide

**Review Questions:** Last week we focused on *Love* as both the starting point and the sustaining power of a Spirit-filled, fruitful life. We explored its biblical meaning as well as what it looks like in action.

How does God's love set the believer apart from those who do not abide in Him?

→ It's the testimony of His grace and power working in our lives.
→ We can't produce an *agapé* type of love naturally or on our own.

What are the characteristics that make *agapé* love different from other types of love?

→ Selfless, Sacrificial, Unconditional, and Everlasting

Does anyone recall in John 13:35 how we are perceived as long as we carry His love?

→ As His disciples

We were given a Love Challenge to attempt over the past week.

Would anyone like to share how they showed selfless love with someone?
or
How by showing them love, it impacted the relationship with that person?

**Leader Introduction**

Although we all have much to be thankful for, the pace and the pressure of everyday life has the potential to drain our joy. So, how do we allow joy to be cultivated in our lives? We need to look no further than the ministry of Paul and the book known as the "Epistle of Joy"— Philippians.

Today our focus will be on *Joy*—how we can differentiate it from happiness, examples of it found in Scripture, and actions we can take to see it flourish in our lives.

# Week 3: Journey to Joy

Today our focus will be on Joy—how we can differentiate it from happiness, examples of it found in Scripture, and actions we can take to see it flourish in our lives.

**Key Scriptures:** Jm 1:2, Ps 16:11, Phil 1-4, Prov 15:23

Unlike happiness, which is often based on external temporary circumstances, biblical joy is a deep, abiding sense of contentment rooted in God's presence, promises, and character. Joy transcends fleeting emotions and reflects a state of the soul that is anchored in faith.

| Aspect | Joy | Happiness |
|---|---|---|
| **Source** | Rooted in God and spiritual truth | Rooted in external circumstances |
| **Depth** | Internal, abiding, and soul-centered | Surface level, external feeling |
| **Endurance** | Lasts through trials and hardships | Fleeting and conditional |
| **Focus** | Christ-centered and eternal | Self-centered and temporal |

Joy does not mean the absence of sadness, rather the Bible tells us it's found in God's presence, even during the most difficult trials.

> **Jm 1:2** Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy.

> **Ps 16:11** You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

We often search for joy in various temporal ways—acquiring possessions, taking vacations, working towards promotions, or filling our time with social activities. However, these pursuits do not provide a lasting emotion and are better defined as leaving us in state of happiness.

Joy is a deliberate choice to adopt a godly perspective—one that allows us to rejoice in times of sorrow, give thanks in the midst of storms, and worship because of His unwavering faithfulness.

Paul's letter to the church in Philippi was written during his imprisonment in Rome, yet the tone is overwhelmingly positive with a recurring emphasis on joy, thankfulness, and rejoicing.

> **Phil 1:3** I *thank* my God every time I remember you.
>
> **Phil 1:12,18** Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel... and in that I *rejoice*.
>
> **Phil 2:17** But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I *rejoice* and share my *joy* with you all.

**Phil 3:1** Finally, my brothers, *rejoice* in the Lord...
**Phil 4:4** *Rejoice* in the Lord always; again I will say, *rejoice*.

The fact that Paul could write such words while enduring persecution is astounding. Imagine being able to pen such joyful encouragement during one of your darkest hours! This attitude is contrary to human nature and can only be attributed to a supernatural ability granted by the Holy Spirit. By keeping his focus on Jesus, Paul was able to experience and exemplify a profound, God-given joy that transcended his circumstances.

Another striking example of Paul's joyful perspective can be found in Acts 26, during his imprisonment in Caesarea. After two years of confinement under unjust charges, Paul is brought before King Agrippa II to speak on his own behalf. Astonishingly, his opening words are, ***"I think myself happy."*** Why? How?

Paul refused to dwell on his temporal suffering and instead saw his trial as an opportunity to share his testimony—to share Jesus! His per-

spective was rooted not in his immediate hardship but in the eternal impact of his words and actions.

> **Prov 15:23** "A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!"

Paul challenges us to rejoice always, reminding us that true joy stems from a Christ-centered mindset, gratitude for God's provision, and a focus on eternal realities. His life is proof that that joy is both possible and sustainable, even in the midst of trials.

**Group Discussion**

- How does joy differ from happiness, both in its source and its nature?

- How does practicing gratitude help sustain joy in our lives?

- What does Phil 2:17 teach us about sacrificial service and its connection to joy?

- What are common circumstances or challenges in life that steal your joy?

- How can you use your personal hardships as opportunities to share your testimony and glorify God, just as Paul did?

- Prov 15:23 highlights the power of words and attitudes in reflecting joy, even during tough times. Have you seen this to be true in your own life?

- Can you recall a time when you experienced joy despite difficult circumstances? What made that possible?

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**Reflection:** Can we truly understand what joy feels like unless we first walk through a season of grief? Would others describe you as joyful? Do you criticize & complain more than encourage & compliment?

**Journey to Joy Challenge:** Start each day this week by thinking of at least one blessing you're thankful for. Then, reflect on how gratitude shifts your perspective and brings joy.

**Additional Scriptures on Joy to read:** Neh 8:10, Rom 15:13, John 16:24

# Week 4 – Perfecting Peace: Leaders Guide

**Review Questions:** Last week we explored *Joy* as a source of our strength, drawing inspiration from Paul's writings. We reflected on joy's enduring nature and its power to transform our perspective, even in the face of trials.

Can anyone tell us some differences between joy & happiness?

→ Joy flows from a deep-rooted relationship of trust with God

It is an internal, lasting emotion

It is steadfast even in the face of trials

It is Christ-centered, focusing on God's sovereignty and the hope of salvation

→ Happiness is tied to experiences or events

It is an external, fleeting feeling

It is dependent upon our circumstances

It is self-centered, focused on personal comfort or immediate gratification

What are some things Joy allows us to do in the face of adversity?

→ Rejoice in sorrow → See hardships as opportunities
→ Be thankful in trials → Worship in storms
→ Testify of God's love → Endure with hope
→ Receive strength → Remain steadfast in faith

What are some ways we can incorporate more joy in our lives?

→ Memorize scriptures on joy
→ Reflect all God had done for us
→ Serve others in need
→ Practice gratitude by focusing on His blessings

→ Spend time in worship, inviting God's presence to renew your spirit
→ Seek opportunities to share your testimony and inspire others

We were given a Joy Challenge to attempt over the past week.

Would anyone like to share their experience with practicing gratitude and whether it led to an increase in joy?

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**Leader Introduction**

Today we'll discuss the definition of biblical *Peace*—the kind that empowers us to face life's challenges with a steadfast confidence. Then we'll explore its different dimensions and learn how to prepare the ground of our hearts for it to flourish in our lives.

# Week 4 – Perfecting Peace

Today we'll discuss the definition of biblical Peace—the kind that empowers us to face life's challenges with steadfast confidence. Then, we'll explore its different dimensions and learn how to prepare the ground of our hearts for it to flourish in our lives.

**Key Scriptures:** Isa 26:3, Eph 2:13-14, John 14:27, 1 Thes 5:13-15, Matt 5:9

Peace means much more than the absence of conflict or tension. The fruit of peace represents a state of tranquility and order, wholeness and contentment. It reflects harmony with and trust in God, resulting in a gift of rest that surpasses all understanding.

> **Isa 26:3** You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

Peace has to do with the condition of our mind. When we fix our sights on God through reading His Word, daily prayer, and maintaining faith in His character, we experience an inner calm, much like the peace Jesus displayed when He slept through the storm.

**Dimensions of Peace.** Throughout Scripture we see varying types of peace that encompass spiritual, emotional, and relational harmony.

> **Peace with God** (Vertical Dimension) - a sense of spiritual order through reconciliation made possible by Jesus and the foundation to other dimensions.

> **Eph 2:13-14** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace.

**Peace of God** (Internal Dimension) - a sense of emotional order offering a profound sense of inner calm that flows from *Peace with God*.

**John 14:27** Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

**Peace on Earth** (Horizontal Dimension) - a sense of relational order that reflects the *Peace of God* in us, as believers are called to be peacemakers. It involves fostering unity, love, and reconciliation in our interactions with others.

**1 Thes 5:13-15** ...Be at peace among yourselves...See that no one repays anyone evil for evil but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

**Matt 5:9** Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

To grasp a peace where anxiety fades, and rest carries us through life's storms—a peace that enables contentment regardless of circumstances—we need only look to Jesus as our perfect example. Throughout His ministry, He never worried, doubted, rushed, or feared. While He experienced the same human emotions we do, He refused to let them dominate or steal the peace within Him.

But how do we invite this God-given peace into our spirit in the midst of life's chaos—the demands of raising children, managing a home, nurturing marriages, and everything else that fills our days?

**Recipe for Peace.** We begin by learning to trust in God, followed by growing our knowledge of Him through daily reading His Word and constant communication in prayer—keeping our minds steadfast on Him. Add to this a heart of submission, discipline, and obedience while

guarding against offense. Then combine with intentional actions: doing good, rejoicing always, giving thanks, and seeking reconciliation with others.

> **Isa 26:3** You keep him in perfect peace whose **mind is stayed** on you, because he **trusts in you**.
>
> **2 Pet 1:2** May God give you more and more grace and peace as you **grow in your knowledge** of God and Jesus our Lord.
>
> **Ps 119:165** Great peace have they which **love thy law**: and **nothing shall offend** them.
>
> **Heb 12:11** No **discipline** seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of **righteousness** and peace for those who have been trained by it.
>
> **1 Thes 5:13-18** ...Be at peace among yourselves...See that **no one repays anyone evil** for evil but always **seek to do good** to one another and to everyone. **Rejoice always**, **pray without ceasing**, **give thanks** in all circumstances; for this is the will of God.
>
> **2 Cor 5:18** All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the **ministry of reconciliation.**

By faithfully following this recipe, we align ourselves with God's will and create an environment for His peace to flourish in our hearts and lives.

**Group Discussion**

- What does peace look like in your life?

• How does trust in God impact the condition of our mind and heart and help us sustain peace in our lives?

• Read Phil 4:4-7; What pathways to peace are we given?

• What areas of your life feel most overwhelming or chaotic? How can you surrender them to God and invite His peace to take over?

• According to Isaiah 26:3, what can cause a lack of peace? Why is this principle so significant?

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**Reflection:** Fruit is grown not to be admired or displayed but consumed and shared. If you are someone who walks in God's peace, it's been given to you to give to others— you can bring it into situations and environments, influencing atmospheres and those around you.

**Perfecting Peace Challenge:** Take time this week in prayer or journaling, reflecting on whether you've been living in Christ's peace. Identify specific areas in your life where you need God's peace and ask Him for it.

Memorize a promise (scripture) on peace and speak it aloud during stressful moments.

**Additional Scriptures on Peace to read:** Rom 5:1, Col 3:15, Ps 29:11

# Week 5: Practicing Patience – Leaders Guide

**Review Questions:** Last week, we discussed that Biblical *Peace* is closely tied to the condition of our minds. By fixing our thoughts on God, we can cultivate an environment where His peace flourishes in our hearts and lives, regardless of our external circumstances.

What are some ways peace can be described?

→ Lack of conflict or tension
→ A state of harmony and contentment
→ A tranquility of order
→ Result of reconciliation
→ An inner calm
→ A gift of rest

Does anyone recall the 3 dimensions of peace discussed?
→ Peace with God – Peace of God – Peace on Earth
What are some "pathways to peace"?

→ Rejoicing, praying, giving thanks
→ Being gentle, disciplined, obedient
→ Living without offense, seeking to be righteous and doing good
→ Reconciliation in relationships

We were given a Peace Challenge to attempt over the past week

Did anyone gain clarity of areas or situations they need God's peace in?

Would anyone be willing to share a scripture they found on peace to meditate on during stressful moments?

**Leader Introduction**

The process of developing P*atience*, especially with people, is like a **spiritual workout**—uncomfortable yet necessary for growth. The process is challenging, requiring stretching, resistance, and consistency. It breaks down before it builds up, but the result is a transformed and fruitful spirit, one that reflects Christ's love and endurance.

**Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet.** ~Aristotle

Today's focus is on *Patience*—whether in dealing with circumstances, people, or even God, it's one of the most challenging virtues to cultivate. Patience isn't merely a passive act of waiting, it's an *active process* of growth requiring self-awareness, a willingness to be uncomfortable, and an ability to show mercy and grace in love.

# Week 5: Practicing Patience

Today's focus is on Patience—whether in dealing with circumstances, people, or even God, it's one of the most challenging virtues to cultivate. Patience isn't merely a passive act of waiting, it's an *active process* of growth requiring self-awareness, a willingness to be uncomfortable, and an ability to show mercy and grace in love.

**Key Scriptures**: Rom 15:5, Ecc 7:8, Prov 16:32[1], 2 Cor 10:5

The New Testament speaks of two types of patience— Hupomoné and Makrothumia.

**Hupomoné** refers to constancy–faithfulness–perseverance, while under pressure. Maintaining one's faith and hope despite challenges. A quality of character that doesn't allow one to surrender and requires trust in God.

| Category | Makrothumia | Hupomone |
|---|---|---|
| Directed towards | People | Difficult Circumstances |
| Opposite is | Anger, Revenge, and Agitation | Hopeless and Giving Up |
| Definition | Ability to face frustration, offense, and provocation without lashing out | A steadfast endurance in the face of trials and difficulties |
| Literal | "Long temper" | "To remain under" |
| Not... | Not retaliating | Not quitting |
| Connected to | Love | Faith and Hope |

**Makrothumia** is to be slow to anger in spite of provocation or difficulty. Often associated with God's character and the word used in Gal 5:22. A

1. https://www.bible.com/bible/59/pro.16.32

quality of self-restraint that does not hastily retaliate when faced with offenses or challenges.

**Romans 15:5**

May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus.

The concept of *makrothumia* asks us to tolerate what seems intolerable—something that can only be developed *with the help of God's Spirit* and a lot of time. Nurturing this fruit requires *recognizing* when feelings of impatience—frustration—anger occur, an *understanding* of why, and most importantly, a *desire* to change.

> *The child who pushed us past our limits, the spouse who didn't do what we asked—how we asked, the friend who pointed out our mistake in front of others, the manager's meeting that could have been an email, the slow-moving cashier in the grocery store...*

These are the moments that present an opportunity to ***pause*** rather than react, ***partner*** with The Spirit within us, and ***practice*** patience.

> **Ecc 7:8**: The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride.

Honest self-examination and knowing what triggers our impatience helps identify matters of the heart that need to be surrendered to God. This begins the painful pruning process of preparing to bear fruit.

> *Unmet expectations, hurt feelings, loss of control, hyper-fixation on goals and action, time constraints, critical thoughts, pride, ego...*

**Addressing Anger.** When faced with situations that provoke feelings of irritation, annoyance, or anger, we often respond in one of four ways. (Only one is aligned with God's plan for growth)

*Repress* it - unconscious blocking of strong emotions; has negative physical impacts

> *Suppress it* - deliberate avoiding of certain emotions; "bottling up" results in mood swings and difficulty communicating feelings in the long-term

*Express it* - reacting with uncontrolled negativity; outbursts, sarcasm, manipulative behavior

*Confess it* - bringing the feelings before God to ask for help; permits His Spirit to transform our thinking or perspective, allowing us to respond with mercy and love

Through confession to God, we're able to acknowledge our feelings without letting them control our actions.

**Prov 16:32**[2] Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

**Spiritual Muscles.** Cultivating patience in our lives is similar to building muscle in the body—it requires intentionality, repetition, and will be uncomfortable. It asks us to bite our tongue vs participating in vain arguments, to turn the other cheek vs lashing out, and to seek understanding and empathy vs reacting and retaliating. When we allow God to shape our hearts through the stretching of our patience, it will lead to a transformation in our spiritual composition. It will break down our pride, ego, and desires for control, efficiency, and comfort to build up a Christlike spirit of patience, humility, trust, and love.

**Group Discussion**

- What circumstances or people tend to test your patience most? What does that reveal about your own heart?

- How can self-awareness help you approach frustrating situations with a spirit of grace and understanding?

- Think of a recent situation where you reacted out of impatience. What could you have done differently to respond with grace and love?

2. https://www.bible.com/bible/59/pro.16.32

- How can we look to **2 Cor 10:5** for help when we're faced with difficult emotions that make us want to lash out?

- What spiritual disciplines can help us grow patience?

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**Reflection:** When impatience sprouts up, take it as an opportunity to reflect and ask, "*What is God wanting to teach me in this moment*?"

**Practicing Patience Challenge:** Use the **Pause—Partner—Practice** method this week when faced with a challenging opportunity.

**Additional Scriptures:** Jam 1:19-20, Rom 5:3, Eph 4:2, 1 Thess 5:14

# Week 6: Kindling Kindness – Leaders Guide

**Review Questions:** Last week, we discussed the active and transformative process of growing *Patience* through self-awareness, humility, and reliance on God's Spirit. We were encouraged to view moments of frustration or offense as opportunities for God to shape our hearts and develop more fruit in our lives.

We defined two Greek words for Patience found in the NT- can anyone remember some of the differences and which one Paul referenced in Gal 5 as part of the Fruit of the Spirit?

→ Hupomoné
Patience in difficult circumstances
Steadfast endurance without losing hope
To remain under
Not quitting
→ *Makrothumia - used in Gal 5
Patience with people
Face frustration and offense without lashing out
Long temper
Not retaliating

In what ways is the development of patience similar to building physical strength?

→ Requires discipline, desire for change, consistency, and it will be uncomfortable.

We were given a Patience Challenge to attempt over the past week.

→ Did anyone try out the **Pause—Partner—Practice** method when faced with a trying moment? What were your results?

**Leader Introduction**

In a society marked by division and self-interest, Christians are called to shine the light of Jesus through acts of kindness. Today we'll explore the biblical foundation of Kindness, practical ways to cultivate it, and the reward of letting it shine in and through us.

# Week 6: Kindling Kindness

In a society marked by division and self-interest, Christians are called to shine the light of Jesus through acts of kindness. Today we'll explore the biblical foundation of Kindness, practical ways to cultivate it, and the reward of letting it shine in and through us.

**Key Scriptures:** Luke 6:35, Rom 12:13, Eph 4:32, Matt 5:44, 2 Tim 1:7

> **Luke 6:35** But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because *He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked*.

**Kindness is love in action.** A deliberate choice to notice the needs of others and take steps to meet them. A selfless, unbiased commitment to the wellbeing of others.

> **Rom 12:13** Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

There are many ways to peel an orange, but are you willing to for someone else?

**Hospitable Kindness:** It involves curating a warm and welcoming environment to foster a sense of connection. This can look like inviting the neighbor over for coffee, holding the door for someone, a friendly smile to a stranger, bringing a meal to new parents, or simply listening to someone who needs to share a concern.

Looking to Jesus, the purest example of kindness, we often see it requires *courage, sacrifice, and going beyond our natural inclinations*. It means humbly giving of ourselves in love and mercy to others—those who may have nothing to offer in return, who may not deserve it, and may never acknowledge or thank us.

> **Eph 4:32** Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

**Difficult Kindness:** Forgiveness, speaking truth in love, and praying for those who have wronged us are among the most challenging acts of kindness. Yet, throughout Scripture, we find powerful examples of these actions that guide us along the narrow way, leading to a Christlike life.

> **Matt 5:44** But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.

On many occasions Jesus spoke *uncomfortable truths* in love while showing kindness. We read of one in John 8, the woman caught in adultery who was guilty but shown unexpected compassion and kindness. Yet, it's His final words to her that reveal the importance of truth paired with kindness, "*Neither do I condemn thee:* ***go, and sin no more***." Sometimes, the kindest thing we can do for others is tell them the truth—but we must not let ourselves be deceived, if what we say or do isn't ***rooted in love,*** it's likely not kind.

What about praying for those who hurt and wrong us? This is one of God's clever ways to help us see from a new perspective. It shifts our view of the offender from one of negativity and resentment to one of compassion and understanding. It cultivates a deeper sense of the virtue in our spirits, a type of loving-kindness.

**Barriers to Kindness:** Opportunities to show kindness often come around several times a day, so what gets in our way from pursuing them?

*We're too busy* - It's easy to miss opportunities to be kind if we're oblivious to what's going on around us. What if God was too busy for us?

*Misaligned priorities* – When we're focused inward rather than seeking God's heart we become selfish. People are God's priority, what's ours?

*We don't understand* - Could this be why it's easy to be unkind to those we don't have a relationship with? When we can't empathize with why someone does what they do, we tend to be cold, judge, and make assumptions.

*Holding unforgiveness* – When we harden our hearts and refuse to allow God to heal us through forgiveness, we will only be bitter. Hurt people, hurt people.

*Fear* – Sometimes we hesitate due to anticipating feelings of vulnerability and the unknown—What if I look dumb? What if I'm rejected? What if they get offended? What if I get hurt? Read **2 Tim 1:7**

The pathway to living in kindness begins by remembering each person we come in contact with is made in God's image and has their own story. As ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor 5:20), it's our commission to show and tell the world of God's goodness. But as the saying goes, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

By practicing kindness, we have the opportunity to mirror the heart of God to a watching world—to be imagers of Jesus.

**Group Discussion**

- What's one way God has shown you kindness recently?

- Have you shown kindness toward someone who wronged you? Did you feel peace after?

- Share a story of someone's kind act that greatly affected you.

- Reflect on a situation where you withheld kindness. Can you rectify it?

- Have you ever avoided speaking truth in an effort to maintain peace? Did the long-term outcome bring the same sense of peace as the short-term?

- Are there barriers to showing kindness that you often struggle with? How can you overcome them?

If time permits, read 2 Samuel 9 and discuss what ways kindness was expressed.

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**Reflection:** What do others *taste and see* after engaging with you—the sweetness of God's love or the bitterness of our carnality? Would those closest to you say you are a kind person?

**Kindling Kindness Challenge:** Perform a random act of kindness for a stranger this week. Reflect on the impact this action had on both you and the recipient.

**Additional Scriptures on Kindness to read:** Acts 28:2, Heb 13:2, Ps 141:5[1], Col 3:12

1. https://ref.ly/Ps%20141.5;esv?t=biblia

# Week 7: Growing Goodness – Leaders Guide

**Review Questions:** Last week we discussed how *Kindness* is a powerful testimony of God's love in action. When we respond with kind words and actions, even when it's hard or undeserved, we reflect the mercy God has shown us.

> We also learned that sometimes, being kind means speaking truth to encourage growth and change. However, what must our motives be rooted in to ensure genuine kindness?
>
> → Love
>
> While opportunities to show kindness surround us daily, various obstacles often hold us back. What are some common barriers keeping us from practicing kindness?

→ Busyness, distractions, self-centeredness, unforgiveness, fear, judgement

> Can anyone recall the key message of Matt 5:44?
>
> → **love your enemies**, **bless** those who curse you, **do good** to those who hate you, and **pray for those who spitefully use you** and persecute you.

We were given a Kindness Challenge to attempt over the past week.

Would anyone be willing to share their experience of showing kindness to a stranger?

> or

What did God reveal to you through this simple act of kindness?

**Leader Introduction**

Who here has said the words "I'm good" in the past week? Chances are, every one of us have. What about expressions like "*Oh my goodness*" or "*They have a good heart*?" According to Webster, *Goodness* is the quality or state of being good. The problem is the word *Good* has become highly versatile with over 120 definitions in the Oxford English Dictionary. Its frequent use in everyday conversation and broad range of meanings has made it a term that is often subjective and shaped by personal perspective.

Today we will define *Goodness*, turning to the Bible for examples that illustrate its true meaning so we can strive to nurture its growth in our lives.

# Week 7: Growing Goodness

Today we will define Goodness, turning to the Bible for examples that illustrate its true meaning so we can strive to nurture its growth in our lives.

**Key Scriptures:** Mic 6:8, Rom 7:18, Eph 5:8-9, Matt 5:16

Society often defines goodness subjectively, focusing mainly on outward actions. In contrast, biblical goodness is unchanging, measured by God's Word, and combines BEING good with DOING good. It reflects a heart that seeks the well-being of others—being both morally righteous and relationally gracious.

> **Mic 6:8** He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; And what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?

Before we begin, let's share with one another how we personally define goodness.

**Getting to the root of Goodness.** The concept of goodness can seem vague, as it's often used interchangeably with kindness, graciousness, or honesty. While these qualities are closely intertwined, none *alone* can capture the depth of goodness as it's also set apart by moral and ethical principles. Just as defining God in a single word would be insufficient, understanding goodness requires exploring the full range of virtues it embodies.

> *Kindness* and goodness are both rooted in compassion yet have distinct differences. Kindness only reflects what we do for others whereas goodness *also* represents the core of our character. One is an attribute of our conduct, the other an attribute of who we are.

*Righteousness,* another key aspect of goodness, goes beyond acting justly, treating others fairly, and living a moral life. It also means helping those who cannot help themselves and is demonstrated through showing mercy to the poor and needy—the widows, orphans, elderly, and homeless.

*Generosity* is an inherent part of righteousness and g*oodness*. It means giving freely of one's self—time, talents, and resources—even to those who aren't deserving, just as Jesus gave Himself for us. True generosity means being open-hearted and open-handed.

*Integrity* or *Honesty* is another intrinsic characteristic of both righteousness and goodness that's shown through the integration of biblical values in our daily life. Simply put, integrity is when our words and actions are consistent in matching our beliefs.

**Biblical Goodness.** While there are many examples woven throughout the Old and New Testaments, the following are two with powerful illustrations of the virtue in action.

**Ruth** showed selfless *kindness* and compassion by staying with Naomi despite having no personal gain or future security. She *generously* and diligently worked to provide for her mother-in-law by gleaning barley—a practice of *righteousness* in Israelite culture, where farmers intentionally left some harvest for the poor (Lev 23:22). Ruth's respect and *integrity* in following Naomi's instruction to seek Boaz as a kinsman-redeemer not only restored Naomi's family line but also positioned her to be part of God's redemptive plan.

> **The Good Samaritan** is another striking example of goodness and compassion. Despite cultural divisions, the Samaritan showed great *kindness*, inconveniencing himself to tend to a stranger in need. He *generously* used his own resources to treat the man's wounds and covered all expenses for lodging and ongoing care. While others failed to do what was morally right, the Samaritan's actions reflected *righteousness*, justice, and *integrity*.

Both narratives show us that being good is the produce of selfless compassion and commitment to doing what is right, even at a personal cost.

**God's Goodness**. Paul said it best in **Rom 7:18** *For I know that* good *itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is* good*, but I cannot carry it out.* Our only hope of transformation from the sinful nature we're born into is to be in relationship with the One who is truly good (Mk 10:18) and to plant His Word in our heart.

As we grow in all that is good, we are also to be conduits through which the **Goodness of God** flows. Every good gift comes from above (Jm 1:17), yet God loves to use us to deliver those gifts to a world in need of hope and light.

> **Eph 5:8-9** For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)

May the fruit of goodness in our lives and interactions always lead others toward God—what a humbling privilege to share His goodness!

> **Matt 5:16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

**Group Discussion**

- How does society's definition of goodness differ or contradict Biblical goodness?

- Have you faced a situation where you had to stand firm in goodness and integrity instead of conforming to cultural norms or worldly pressures? What helped you stay faithful?

- Why is doing good sometimes difficult, even when we know what is right? How can we overcome this struggle? (Gal 5:16)

- How can we demonstrate God's goodness in our communities, churches, or workplaces?

- Share a time when someone's goodness impacted your life or faith.

If time permits, read Matt 6:2 and 7:12. What role can motives play in doing good and what does that say about one's integrity?

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***Reflection:*** How many times have you had an impulse to do some good but stifled it by giving yourself some "good" reason why you shouldn't? Next time you find yourself in this situation remember Paul's words in 1 Thes 5:19, "Do not quench the Spirit."

**Growing Goodness Challenge:** Look for opportunities to demonstrate God's *Goodness* this week—serve someone in need, be generous, show mercy, stand firm in integrity and truth, etc.

**Additional Scriptures on Goodness to read:** Gal 6:10, Ps 27:13; Ps 34:8, Rom 12:9

# Week 8: Fortifying Faithfulness – Leaders Guide

**Review Questions:** Last week we discovered that living a life characterized by biblical *Goodness* means more than merely refraining from wrongdoing. It demands intentional acts of compassion and service towards others with a foundation of moral and ethical principles.

What are some ways biblical Goodness differs from society's definition?

→ Society's definition is often subjective based on individual beliefs or cultural norms that can change over time and is focused on outward actions.

→ The Biblical definition is unchanging, rooted in God's character and measured against His word, not human opinions. It extends beyond only doing good but involves a character of being good.

The concept of Goodness is best defined by exploring the full range of virtues it embodies. What are some of those virtues?

→ Kindness, Righteousness, Generosity, Integrity / Honesty

We were given a Goodness Challenge to attempt over the past week

Would anyone like to share what you found difficult while trying to practice goodness?

or

What did this challenge reveal about how you view kindness, justice, and generosity?

**Leader Introduction**

Biblical *Faithfulness* looks like standing firm in convictions even if it means being thrown into the lion's den, choosing the fiery furnace in order to keep His commandments, refusing to curse God even when you lose everything, and enduring persecution, imprisonment, and hardship to spread the gospel.

One who is faithful is trustworthy and reliable, loyal and committed, selfless and humble.

As we explore the multifaceted nature of faithfulness today, we must remember God's own faithfulness is our model, and it's His Spirit that enables us to stay the course.

# Week 8: Fortifying Faithfulness

One who is faithful is trustworthy and reliable, loyal and committed, selfless and humble.

As we explore the multifaceted nature of faithfulness today, we must remember God's own faithfulness is our model, and it's His Spirit that enables us to stay the course.

**Key Scriptures:** Deut 7:9, 2 Pet 1:5-8, Jm 2:17, Isa 37:31, 2 Tim 2:13

> **Deut 7:9** Know therefore that the LORD thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations.

**Faithfulness to God** means "we're not sure what the future holds, but we know who holds it." It's a response of obedience, unwavering devotion, trust in His promises, and steadfast confidence that He is the creator and ruler of all things.

**Faithfulness in relationships** means others can confide in and depend on us. It's commitment and loyalty when faced with disappointment and temptation, trust and integrity through heartbreak and difficulty.

**Faithfulness in serving** means using our gifts and talents for God's glory. It's consistency in outreach and persistence to fulfill God's purpose for our life, even when we want to jump ship.

**Heroes of Faith.** Heb 11, known as the *Chapter of Faith*, highlights extraordinary trust and faith.

> By faith Enoch was taken from this life...he was **commended as one who pleased God**

> By faith Noah, when warned about *things not yet seen*, **in holy fear** built an ark
>
> By faith Abraham...**obeyed and went**, even though he did not know where he was going
>
> By faith Sarah...was enabled to bear a child **because sheconsidered Him faithful** who had made the promise

These are not all accounts of perfect people, yet God partnered with them. Some of their flaws are as memorable as their faith, yet they're called heroes. Is it not encouraging to know God's faithfulness is greater than our failures! Faithful living is not easy—temptations, distractions, and discouragement can cause us to waver. When we fail, we must pick ourselves up, turn back to Him in trust, and continue to climb the mountain—He will provide the strength.

**Unfruitful Faith**. Faithfulness doesn't grow in isolation, nor does it stand alone—it's strengthened by the other Fruit of the Spirit. Read 2 Pet 1:5-8.

We've all heard the saying "I am a person of faith" but without other spiritual fruit, couldn't it diminish one's witness? Consider a "person of faith" that shows no brotherly love and kindness, or one without godliness and joy. Such Christianity doesn't point others to God, it's simply faith without knowledge of God's love—fruitless faith.

The truth is, we live in a culture where many believe that having faith God exists is enough, the problem with this is the Word tells us even the demons believe (Jm 2:19). This kind of mindset brings little to no glory to God and will not lead to an increase in knowledge of His character. Faith alone is incomplete and unproductive—a tree that lacks fruit also lacks the ability to provide nourishment.

> Jm 2:17 tells us that faith without works is dead, and is alone. This is why we must add to our faith, otherwise we will be barren and rendered unfruitful.

**Roots and Fruit.** The more we exercise faith in every arena of our lives, the more our spiritual roots expand. A deeply rooted tree is steadfast and unwavering, producing abundant fruit. By leaning on God's strength, feeding on His Word, pursuing Him in prayer, crucifying our fleshly desires through fasting, seeking accountability from fellow believers, and remaining loyal in our commitments we will yield stronger roots of faithfulness.

**Isa 37:31** Judah shall again *take root downward*, and *bear fruit upward*.

**Lessons in Unfaithfulness.** God extends mercy and forgiveness when we confess and turn our eyes back to Him (1 John 1:9[1]), but our actions still have consequences.

> Selfish desires caused Adam and Eve to rebel. Their disobedience led to separation from God as well as physical and spiritual death.
>
> Due to fear of people's opinions rather than fear of God, King Saul spared King Agag. His pride and lack of obedience and respect for God led to his rejection from God.
>
> David's adultery was born out of lust and misuse of power. Though forgiven because he confessed and repented, his child died and family suffered ongoing tragedy.
>
> Ananias and Sapphira lied out of greed and deception. Their lack of integrity ended in immediate death.

1. https://dailyverses.net/1-john/1/9

Lack of trust, disobedience, misplaced fear, spiritual weakness, and self-interest—lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and the pride of life—are all stumbling blocks to remaining faithful.

> **2 Tim 2:13** If we are faithless, he remains faithful— for He cannot deny Himself.

**Group Discussion**

- Does remembering God's faithfulness help you to trust Him in hard times? How can hardships be viewed as faith building opportunities rather than obstacles?

- Share a testimony of God's faithfulness in your life and the impact it had on you or others.

- What are some challenges or obstacles that weaken faith? How can you overcome them?

- Do you feel that community and group fellowship have an impact on your spiritual growth? How can we encourage and support others in strengthening their faith?

- What habits or spiritual disciplines do you need to practice more to mature your faith?

If time permits, read Jm 2:14-25.

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**Reflection:** Faith is not a feeling; it's an action that requires more than simple belief. It necessitates trusting when we cannot see, stepping out when it makes no sense, and hoping when we have no tangible evidence.

**Fortifying Faithfulness Challenge:** Chose one area of your life where you struggle with consistency (prayer, Bible study, relational com-

mitments, serving, etc.) and commit to being intentionally faithful for the entire week.

**Additional Scriptures on Faithfulness to read:** Prov 3:3-4 & 27:6, Col 2:7, Heb 11:1&6

# Week 9: Guiding Gently – Leaders Guide

**Review Questions:** Last week we explored the call to *Faithfulness* and how it applies to different areas of our lives. Through a closer look at some "Heros of Faith," we discovered *Faithfulness* isn't about being perfect—it's about trusting God. We also learned that faithfulness doesn't stand alone; it depends on the development of other spiritual fruits to grow and endure.

What three facets of faithfulness were discussed?

→ Faithfulness to God, In Relationships, and In Serving

What are some adjectives of Faithfulness?

→ Trustworthy, reliable, loyal, committed,

→ Unwavering, devoted, steadfast, consistent

What book and chapter are known as the "Chapter of Faith"

→ Hebrews 11

We were given a Faithfulness Challenge to attempt over the past week

Would anyone like to share any obstacles you faced for this challenge and how you overcame them?

or

Did you see a shift or change in your relationship with God or others?

**Leader Introduction**

Today we'll analyze the 8th attribute of fruit that Paul gives us in Galatians 5—one that symbolizes controlled strength, exercised with love and humility: *Gentleness*.

We see it displayed over and over in the way Jesus carried Himself—powerful yet tender, just yet compassionate. He corrected without crushing, led without overpowering, and extended grace without compromising the truth.

The Greek word **prautés** is translated through the New Testament as *Gentleness*, *Meekness*, or *Humility*; depending on the translation, your Bible will likely say g*entleness* or m*eekness* for vs 23. From a biblical perspective, it can be summed up as the divinely-balanced virtue of exercising power in submission to God while avoiding unnecessary harshness.

# Week 9: Guiding Gently

The Greek word **prautés** is translated through the New Testament as Gentleness, Meekness, or Humility; depending on the translation, your Bible will likely say gentleness or m*eekness* for vs 23. From a biblical perspective, it can be summed up as the divinely-balanced virtue of exercising power in submission to God while avoiding unnecessary harshness.

**Key Scriptures:** Eph 4:1-3, Nub 12:3, Phil 2:3-4, Prov 15:1, 1 Pet 3:15-16

> **Eph 4:1-3** I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

**Gentleness** reflects the heart and manner in which goodness is often expressed. While goodness seeks to do what is right and beneficial, gentleness ensures it's carried out with compassion, humility, and sensitivity. True gentleness handles the fragile and hurting with great care, correcting without harshness, and protecting from harm through tenderness and kindness.

> An example of this in action is found in John 8—the woman caught in adultery. Jesus had the right to be harsh with all—the woman, the Pharisees, and the scribes—yet His gentle answer quieted the words of condemnation and changed all their hearts.

***Meekness*** is choosing restraint over retaliation, remaining calm when provoked, accepting correction to grow, and trusting God's justice. It asks for a heart that is teachable and a yielded spirit that's motivated by re-

spect, humility, and compassion. Meekness is not indicative of weakness but rather strength submitted to God, allowing Him to fight our battles.

> Daivd displayed this virtue in 1 Sam 24. He had the ability to take King Saul's life and claim the throne he had been promised, yet he chose to forfeit his power in that moment to a God whose ways are higher than ours.

***Humility*** is recognizing our limitations and not thinking more highly, or lowly, of ourselves than we should. Acknowledging that we are wholly dependent on God and without Him, there wouldn't be any good in us, we wouldn't have what we have or lead the life we live.

> **Nub 12:3** says Moses was the humblest man of his time—raised as royalty, mightily used by God, and had the privilege of speaking to God face to face! Yet, he was quick to acknowledge his weaknesses, never acted superior to those he led, and always sought God's guidance. When the people sinned, he interceded for their sake (**Ex 32:32**) and when his own sister rose up against him, he prayed for healing on her behalf.

Those who are gentle and meek walk in humility and self-control. They're not prideful, boisterous, vengeful, or self-centered, but rather self-emptying, seeking to do God's will above all else and to encourage others.

> **Phil 2:3-4** Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

**Gentleness in correction.** Often, when God allows us to see shortcomings or flaws in others, it's not our role to confront them. Instead,

His desire is that we intercede for them in prayer, allowing Him to speak to their hearts and minds. However, when we're sure God is pressing us to gently guide someone who is walking in error—whether out of ignorance or willful sin—we must do so, prayerfully, following the Spirit's leading. We should come alongside them with a balance of softness and strength, speaking truth in compassion (Gal 6:1), while recognizing that those who are struggling may be fragile and in need of care. The goal of proper, gentle correction should always be restoration, never offense, humiliation, or condemnation.

> **Prov 15:1** A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

**Gentleness in opposition.** Being gentle doesn't mean being a passive pushover, silent, or compromising. We are called to be bold, standing firm in biblical truth; however, the way we stand matters. Gentleness in the face of resistance, humiliation, or slander speaks truth in love, calmly responds rather than reacting in anger, remains humble, shows grace, and doesn't seek to "win" the argument. When we approach challenges with gentleness and compassion—without harshness or arrogance—it builds bridges instead of walls, opening doors for productive conversation and giving room for the Spirit to turn opposition into an opportunity for His glory.

> **1 Pet 3:15** But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

**Group Discussion**

- Have you been on the receiving end of harsh words or actions that had a lasting impact on you? How has that experience shaped the way you view yourself and treat others?

- What are some common excuses we use for not being gentle in certain circumstances? Do you believe some personality types may struggle with this fruit more than others?

- Regarding humility, why is it important not to think too highly or too lowly of ourselves?

- Read Jm 1:19. Conflict is unavoidable, how we respond can diffuse or escalate a situation. Share a time you experienced this firsthand.

- Think of a time when you didn't respond gently. What could you do differently next time?

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**Reflection:** Do your words and actions put people at ease or cause intimidation? At the end of each day ask yourself, "*Did my words build up in encouragement or tear down in division? How can I do better tomorrow?*"

**Guiding Gently Challenge:** This week, make conscious efforts to respond with gentleness in moments of misunderstanding, frustration, or tension-whether with family, friends, or strangers. Instead of reacting defensively, pause to quickly pray and choose a soft and kind response.

**Additional Scriptures on Gentleness to read:** 2 Tim 2:24, Jm 3:17, Matt 11:28-30, Prov 15:4

# Week 10: Developing Discipline – Leaders Guide

**Review Questions:** Last week we discussed how true *Gentleness* walks hand in hand with self-control and a heart willing to submit to God's will rather than seeking personal vengeance or validation. It's a balance of softness and strength, requires us to respond rather than react and build bridges instead of walls.

We learned that the Greek word **Prautés** has 3 common translations in the New Testament. What are they?

→ Gentleness, Meekness, Humility

What is the goal of exercising proper gentleness in correction?

→ Restoration—never offense, humiliation or condemnation

What truths did we learn in James 1:19 that help in times of conflict?

→ Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry

We were given a Guiding Gently Challenge to attempt over the past week

Was anyone successful in practicing gentleness this week? If so, would you share what that looked like?

Was it harder or easier than you expected to practice responding instead of reacting?

**Leader Introduction**

Today we'll examine the final fruit in Paul's list of godly characteristics that define a mature Christian—self-control. Also referred to as self-discipline or temperance, this virtue, through the power of God's Spirit, enables us to exercise restraint in all areas of life.

In Matthew 4:1-11, we see one of the ultimate examples of this variation of fruit when Jesus spends 40 days in the wilderness. Despite intense hunger, the temptation of power, and the opportunity to prove Himself, **He did not give in**. Instead, He relied on **Scripture and obedience to God**, setting the example for us on how to stand firm against the enemy's attacks.

# Week 10: Developing Discipline

Today we'll examine the final fruit in Paul's list of godly characteristics that define a mature Christian—self-control. Also referred to as self-discipline or temperance, this virtue, through the power of God's Spirit, enables us to exercise restraint in all areas of life.

**Key Scriptures:** Pro 25:28, Jm 1:14-15, Gal 5:16, 1 Titus 2:11-12

**What is it?** Self-control is to be ruled from within—an inner strength over our desires and appetites. Spiritual self-control is God's strength, power, and dominion working in us, enabling us to do what we cannot on our own. It's not something that can be willed into existence but begins with a heart genuinely desiring to live a life of *surrender* in relationship with God.

> **Prov 25:28** A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls

**The necessity of discipline.** When we lack the ability to govern ourselves in an area of life, we become like the city in Prov 25—vulnerable to the enemy's influence and easily led off course. Living in a fallen world means we're in an ongoing battle of tug of war between the desires of our flesh and spirit. Ultimately, it's our daily habits that determine which one prevails in the face of temptation.

> **Jm 1:14-15** But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

To live a spirit-controlled life, we must cultivate spiritual discipline. This begins by *daily* denying ourselves and taking up our cross (Lk 9:23)—completely surrendering our will to His, humbling ourselves in prayer, and letting Him know we *want* and *need* His help.

**Gal 5:16** So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

**Developing discipline.**

Daily time with God – Prioritizing time in prayer and reading His Word are foundational habits leading to alignment with His will and mastery over our desires.

Setting Boundaries – Our eyes and ears are gateways to our mind and heart, what we consume will determine what grows in our spirit.

Intentional Separation – Deliberately distancing ourselves from environments, people, and distractions that could pull us away from God or cause us to stumble.

Community – Surrounding ourselves with like-minded believers who can encourage and challenge us is a powerful way to ensure accountability.

Fasting – Denying our flesh sharpens our sensitivity to God's voice, strengthens our dependence on Him, and helps break any strongholds we're struggling with.

**Knowing our weaknesses.** Areas needing discipline and self-control typically fall into one of two categories—internal thoughts and emotions or external words and behaviors.

I**nternal struggles** can be fear, anxiety, offense, anger, impure thoughts, lust, jealousy, arrogance, pride, greed, and resentment.

> E**xternal shortcomings** can take the form of gossip, slander, profanity, criticism, adultery, lying, substance abuse, eating disorders, neglecting physical health, overspending, lack of moderation, and various forms of distraction.

What we allow to take root in our thoughts develops into emotions, controls our actions, shapes our habits, and forms our character. If unchecked, unstable emotions, uncontrolled desire, and unhealthy habits can lead to works of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21, 2 Tim 3:1-5) rather than Fruit of the Spirit.

> **1 Titus 2:11-12** For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

Is it mere happenstance that Paul lists love first and self-control last in Gal 5? Or could it be that love serves as the foundation for all Fruit of the Spirit, while self-control is the strength that sustains and safeguards—both being essential for fruit to flourish?

> It takes self-control to continue loving sacrificially, or choosing joy in suffering, peace in chaos, patience in frustration, kindness over comfort, goodness with integrity, faithfulness in uncertainty, and gentleness in conflict.

**Love fuels our actions, but self-control ensures they endure.**

Spirit-empowered discipline allows us to live a life pleasing to God, having mastery over impulses, temptations, and distractions that can hinder our relationship with Him. It allows us to say, "Not my will, but Thine be done", to respond rather react, and positions us to help lead others, with authority, through what we've overcome.

**Group Discussion**

- What does exercising discipline and self-control look like in your life?

- How does self-control contribute to spiritual maturity?

- What distractions are common today that previous generations didn't face?

- What boundaries or habits can help you prioritize time with God over distractions?

- What are the dangers of living a life without moderation?

- In what ways does God use seasons of waiting, silence, or limits to strengthen our self-control?

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**Reflection:** Self-control doesn't mature overnight—it grows through trial and error, successes and failures. Growth comes day by day as we develop the discipline that strengthens it. If you have failed in an area, don't give up—keep trying until you succeed.

**Developing Discipline Challenge:** Tell yourself "No" to something every day this week. Reflect on your progress: Were you able to follow through? What did you learn about yourself in the process? Did this exercise impact your self-discipline?

**Additional Scriptures on Discipline to read:** 2 Tim 1:7, Rom 7:18-19, 1 Cor 9:24-2

# Week 11: Fruit of the Harvest – Leaders Guide

**Review Questions:** Last week we discussed how *Discipline* is the foundation to *Self-Control,* creating habits that change character. Spiritual self-control is partnering with God's strength and power to do what is right, even when every part of us wants to do the opposite. We also considered the intention that Paul may have taken when listing Love first and Self-Control last in Galatians 5.

What are some practical ways to develop discipline in our lives?

→ **Daily time with God** – Prayer & Reading the Word

→ **Boundaries** – What we consume is what will grow in our spirits

→ **Intentional separation** – avoiding distractions, environments, and people who could cause us to stumble

→ **Community** – Finding like-minded believers for accountability and encouragement

→ **Fasting** – Denying ourselves can sharpen our sensitivity to God's voice and make us more dependent on Him

Who recalls the two categories of our lives that require discipline and self-control?

→ **Internal** thoughts and emotions

→ **External** words and behaviors

We were given a Developing Discipline Challenge to attempt over the past week

> Who was able to practice self-discipline and tell themselves **"No"** each day this week?
>
> Would anyone be willing to share what this exercise revealed to you about your own disciplines and self-control?

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**Leader Introduction**

Fruit doesn't grow overnight—it takes a lifetime of surrender, growth, and pruning to produce our best fruit. But if we keep the soil of our hearts ready, God will continue to sow seeds. And with each season, the harvest will grow richer—our fruit a little sweeter, a little stronger, and a little more like Him. True harvest isn't just about what we do, but about who we become through the Holy Spirit.

In Scripture, the *Harvest* symbolizes God's provision and blessing, reaping what is sown, spiritual maturity, and reaching the lost. Today we'll wrap up this study by reflecting on the spiritual harvest we're called to partake in.

# Week 11: Fruit of the Harvest

In Scripture, the Harvest symbolizes God's provision and blessing, reaping what is sown, spiritual maturity, and reaching the lost. Today we'll wrap up this study by reflecting on the spiritual harvest we're called to partake in.

**Key Scriptures:** Matt 9:37-38, Ps 1:3, Ecc 3:1, Prov 11:30, 1 Cor 15:58, Gal 6:6-10, Gal 5:19-21

> **Matt 9:37-38** The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

**We are both the fruit and laborers of the Harvest.** Having been gathered into God's Kingdom, we must continue to grow in Him, but as we mature, we're also commissioned to be workers in the field—to be disciples. Empowered by His Spirit, and through our words, actions, and testimonies we sow and care for seeds with the hope of a generous harvest.

Those who are brought into The Kingdom are sent out to bear His Fruit—to be disciples who make disciples. That's the cycle, season after season—that's the heart of **the Great Commission.**

> **Ps 1:3** They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season.

**Seasons of Harvest.** Just as certain fruits ripen in their appointed seasons, God leads us through different seasons to cultivate the fullness of His fruit within us. Spiritual growth doesn't happen overnight—it takes effort, steady diligence, and a willingness to be shaped. There are laborious seasons of breaking ground, planting, pruning, waiting, guarding against threats, and weathering storms or drought before the fruit can fully mature.

If we truly desire His fruit, we must be willing to embrace the refining journey—one often marked by patience, discomfort, and challenges. It's a journey that requires us to abide in Him, season after season.

> **Ecc 3:1** There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.

**Pain of Pruning.** Yielding a fruitful harvest first requires embracing periods of pruning, a process where God cuts into our hearts and may even allow afflictions through others to shape us. Through suffering, we learn patience; in opposition, humility; and in rejection, unconditional love. Though difficult, these trials strip away pride, unforgiveness, and self-reliance until our priorities align with His, and our focus shifts to what matters most to Him. It's in the pruning that we're positioned to become fruit-bearers who want nothing more than to see like Him, hear like Him, think like Him, speak like Him, serve like Him, love like Him—to be like Him.

**Prov 11:30 -** The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he who wins souls is wise.

**Bearing Fruit in Community.** We all face moments when giving up feels easier than pressing on. But if we choose to persevere and remain faithful—even when we don't understand—we'll bear fruit in due time. Fruit that nourishes others, glorifies God, and impacts our families and communities.

> **1 Cor 15:58** Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

The storms and trials we endure often become our greatest opportunities for growth and testimony. It's in those times of perseverance that we please God, allowing Him to lift us up and say, "*Look at My people! They are* ***steadfast, unmovable, always abounding*** *in the work of the*

*Lord—they reflect My character and bear My fruit*!" It's in those trials that we shine as a light to the lost, hurting, and hopeless. Through our faithfulness, others will see His strength, feel His love, and be drawn in, saying, *"I want that."* That's when we become true laborers of the Harvest.

> **Gal 6:9** Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

**Reaping the Harvest**. Reaping represents the rewards—or consequences—of living a life aligned with God's will or one ruled by the flesh. Too often we associate "bad fruit" only with the 17 works of the flesh (Gal 5) but whenever we choose anything other than the fruit of the Spirit, we're sowing to the flesh. Take impatience, for example. One of the *laws of the harvest*, found in Gal 6:6–10, is that we reap in a different season than we sow. For a people who crave instant gratification, this principle is hard to accept and often tempts us to step out of God's will rather than trust and abide in Him.

> It's impatience that leads us to take matters into our own hands, rush ahead of God's timing, and lean on our own logic. Consider Abraham's impatience, which led to Ishmael, or the Israelites, whose constant grumbling delayed their entry into the Promised Land by 40 years. The carnal path will never produce the results God desires for us—and may even delay our promises.

The beauty of the Fruit of the Spirit is in its wholeness—each attribute working together to form a well-rounded, healthy spiritual life. While fruit may reflect our maturity and sanctification as Christians, make no mistake—it's not just for us. It's meant to serve, encourage, and strengthen others. Only when we intentionally cultivate fruit will we have something meaningful to offer those who are searching and hungry for more than what the world can give.

**Group Discussion**

- How have you been called to labor in the field? Where has God placed you to sow and reap?

- What season are you in right now and how is it shaping the way you live out your faith?

- What helps you stay rooted in a season of waiting or pruning?

- In what ways has God pruned you to help you grow spiritually?

- How do you believe your fruit has been a testimony to others?

- What do all 9 flavors of fruit have in common when it comes to how they are grown in us?

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**The Fruit Test:** Is what I'm doing glorifying God, pointing back to Jesus, edifying others, and ***is it rooted in love?***

**Fruit of the Harvest Challenge:** Look over the list you made during the 1st week of this study, take notes on progress, and reprioritize your list to continue using it as a goal to strive towards.

# Show Me Your Fruit & I'll Know Your God

Written by a conglomeration of authors, namely the Holy Spirit.